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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ASUNCION 001108

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/01/2015

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MARR](#) [PINR](#) [IZ](#) [PA](#)

SUBJECT: PARAGUAY: ADDRESSING ANTI-U.S. RHETORIC

REF: A. ASUNCION 1075

[1](#)B. ASUNCION 1048

[1](#)C. ASUNCION 1046

Classified By: Ambassador John F. Keane for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Sept. 1 DCM told Patria Querida Party Vice President Daniel Codas that the USG objected to disrespectful and inaccurate statements about U.S. policy by its legislators. Codas denied that PQ had changed its basically pro-U.S. stance but agreed that some legislators had crossed the line in their criticism of SecDef. He agreed to pass our message on to party leaders. A conspiratorial and transactional culture and immature political system can lead to exaggerated skepticisms of U.S. action, even among our friends. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) September 1 DCM asked Patria Querida (PQ) party VP Daniel Codas to explain recent anti-U.S. statements by his party's legislators (reftels), protesting their disrespectful tone and inaccurate content, and asking if they reflect a reorientation of PQ's centrist, reformist orientation. Examples include Deputy Lacognata, s calling SecDef a "war criminal," Deputy Acha, s openly criticizing the visit on the Congressional floor, Senator Mendoza de Acha, s call for a formal explanation of SecDef, s visit and caution that supporting U.S. policy was dangerous for Paraguay, and Senator Duarte, s statement that "the U.S. is only interested in oil and water resources" and SecDef visit was "an embarrassment for the nation."

[1](#)3. (C) DCM stressed that PQ was free to form and voice its own opinions, but that the U.S. would judge the party by its actions and wanted them to know of our concerns. Respectful disagreement with U.S. policy was very different from calling us war criminals; allegations that U.S. policy was to steal oil or water from weak nations played into hysterical misinformation campaigns unworthy of a serious party. In addition, these comments showed lack of understanding of bilateral relations and the reasons for SecDef, s visit.

[1](#)4. (C) Codas said PQ remained a center-right party, but with a significant leftist minority. A recent proposal to seek observer (but not member) status within the Socialist International was dropped when a PQ majority objected, he continued, but PQ seeks good relations with parties across the political spectrum. He denied that PQ had in any way changed its basically pro-U.S. position, but admitted that SecDef polarized the party. Some, such as Lacognata, were committed leftists, unlikely to change and basically opposed to U.S. foreign policy. Others such as Duarte, had leftist tendencies accentuated by reaction to Iraq. Acha (a recent IV) was young and bright, with leftist tendencies but worth cultivating and subject to reason. Mendoza de Acha, he stressed, had stated the PQ position, which was to: 1) criticize GOP foreign policy in general as disoriented, inconsistent, and dismally unsuccessful; 2) seek an explanation as to why SecDef came; 3) warn of the dangers prompted by identifying with U.S. policies that could make Paraguay a terrorist target.

[1](#)5. (C) Duarte said PQ was wary of calls to abandon MERCOSUR, whatever its failings; if the GOP had a logical plan to improve ties to the U.S., that was fine, he said, but PQ suspected that President Duarte was flailing around rather than thinking strategically, and PQ would attack him for that. On SecDef, he said that the most critical elements within PQ had chosen to speak out, giving a false impression of the party's views. In addition, he acknowledged that some crossed the line from legitimate disagreement to insults and misinformation. He said he understood our message and would pass it on.

[1](#)6. (C) DCM concluded with an explanation of U.S. policy, the reasons for SecDef, s visit, and an offer to answer PQ questions whenever they arise. Reiterating that PQ was free to voice its opinions, he stressed that the USG simply wished to understand PQ's stance and to request respect and avoidance of misinformation which fueled anti-Americanism. DCM mentioned that he had also raised the issue briefly with PQ Senator Miguel Carrizosa and that the Ambassador would raise it with PQ President Pedro Fadul. Codas said he appreciated our direct approach. He suggested that: follow-up with Deputy Lacognata would be a waste of time; he would speak to Senator Duarte, who can be difficult, and Embassy could follow-up later; a POL meeting with Senator

Mendoza de Acha to explain our views would be useful; further contact with Deputy Acha is called for. He would brief PQ leader Fadul.

17. (C) Comment: This issue demonstrates Paraguay,s immature and dysfunctional political system and conspiratorial culture. Most political parties stand for little or nothing ideologically and tactical moves and alliances dominate the scene. In addition, the lack of sophistication and understanding of the basics of foreign relations (even among the elite) foments the crassest of conspiracy theories (e.g. the US is planning to steal Paraguay,s water supply.) Even those who laugh at such conspiracies are not beyond utilizing them for their own agenda (nudging Brazil to be more supportive, for example.) These factors and the "transactional culture" here (The US must be after something secret) combine to heighten suspicions of U.S. actions, even among our friends. Ironically, Brazil and Argentina have badly overplayed their hands in publicly humiliating the GOP by demanding an explanation for SecDef,s visit; this temporarily put nationalist sentiment on our side.  
KEANE